

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A disposable diaper of a flat type comprising a rear portion that is to be applied to the back of a wearer, a front portion that is to be applied to the stomach of the wearer, and a crotch portion located between the rear portion and the front portion including an absorbent member, the rear portion having a waistband portion oppositely extending from each side thereof, at least one of the waistband portions having a band fastening member near the free end thereof so that the opposite waistbands are fastened together on the front side of the wearer, wherein

a pair of standing gathers are formed on the longer sides of the diaper positioned in spaced parallel relationship to each other along said crotch portion,

laterally separated low stiffness regions R1 having a bending stiffness of 25 cN/50 mm or lower in the diaper width direction provided within a region of the crotch portion having the absorbent member in its thickness,

wherein a central portion of said region of said crotch portion further includes a high stiffness region R2 disposed between and separate and distinct from said laterally separated low stiffness regions and having a bending stiffness of higher than 25 cN/50 mm in the diaper width direction, and wherein the low stiffness regions R1 each comprise an oblong region provided along each lateral side edge of the absorbent member in said region of said crotch portion adjacent said region of higher stiffness,

the standing gathers on each side are fixed at an extension ratio of 100% or higher, and

the tensile characteristics of the standing gathers on each side measured in their state not

fixed to the diaper are such that the tensile load required to extend to an effective extension ratio is 20 to 120 cN and that the increase rate of tensile load required for extending from an extension ratio of 20% up to the effective extension ratio is 1.0 cN/% or lower, the effective extension ratio being 30% lower than the fixing extension ratio, and

wherein said front and rear portions include a high stiffness region but do not include a low stiffness region, and wherein said low stiffness region is present only in said crotch portion.

2-3. (Cancelled)

4. (Original) The disposable diaper according to claim 1, which is for an infant, wherein the smallest width of the crotch portion is 100 to 240 mm.

5. (Original) The disposable diaper according to claim 1, which is for an adult, wherein the smallest width of the crotch portion is 150 to 300 mm.

6-8. (Cancelled)

9. (Previously Presented) The disposable diaper according to claim 1, wherein said low stiffness region is formed by modifying the basis weight of said absorbent member in a region of said absorbent member where a low stiffness region is desired.

10. (New) The disposable diaper according to claim 1, wherein said absorbent member is comprised of an upper absorbent layer and a lower absorbent layer, and a portion of the absorbent member is formed solely of either the upper or lower absorbent layers to provide said low stiffness region.